

JUN 4 1964

PERS; Subirata, Euripides

CIA 8-03, 142-6

Soc 4-02.1

Soc 4-01.5

CUBA USES HUMOR AS POLITICAL TOOL

Depicts U.S. as Big Bungler
to Win Support at Home

By RICHARD EDER

Special to The New York Times

HAVANA, May 30—When two United States visitors climbed aboard a truck loaded with students going to cut sugar cane, Euripides Subirata told them exuberantly what the Cuban revolution was all about.

Mr. Subirata, a stout man who is 41 years old, is a life-long Communist who upholstered coffins before the revolution and who now is studying to enter the university.

He stood, swaying, and thrust out his stomach. "You see—there's no hunger in Cuba," he said. "We eat little children." He picked up a machete and waved it.

"We will use this to cut cane," Mr. Subirata continued. "And if you come here peacefully, we will receive you peacefully. If not, we have machetes and guns, and Fidel has some Russian et ceteras to greet you with."

The students laughed at his exaggerated manner, but also in agreement with what he said.

Clowning Part of Indoctrination

Part master of ceremonies, part buffoon, part indoctrinator, Mr. Subirata is a figure frequently found in Cuba these days. He clowns, and exaggerates revolutionary attitudes, and makes his audience laugh. At the same time, the substance of his message gets across clearly.

Laughter—a muscular, incisive and not particularly humorous laughter—is one of the great emotional weapons of the Cuban revolution.

The busboy who gives the waiters political lectures, the woman with varicose veins who heads the block committee and asks the neighbors who their visitors are, the bookkeeper who works 20 hours a week extra—these take their slogans as much from the gibes as from the thundering of their leaders.

Important speeches here generally launch not only a new slogan, but a new joke as well.

The principal source of humor comes from the purported spectacle of little Cuba standing off the big, bungling United States. The frenetic but futile efforts of internal opponents to damage the revolution is widely caricatured.

Voice of America Satirized

Finally, the extraordinary assortment of rumors reported over the Voice of America gives Cuba's leaders an excellent chance to make fun of their enemies. A ritual part of any important speech is the reading of news agency reports of what anti-Castro groups in Miami are saying about the situation here.

Last week, when Defense Minister Raul Castro spoke in Santiago, he got considerable mileage out of the rumors that he was dead or injured. "Woe to any C.I.A. agent who falls into the hands of this dead man," he warned.

This week, Palante, a humor magazine, gives full play to jokes drawn from images in Mr. Castro's speech.

It is filled with pictures of worms, the official name for opponents, wearing piteous looks as cheerful revolutionaries in overalls snip their tel-

ephone lines. This illustrated a warning by Mr. Castro that rumormongers would have their telephones confiscated.

Another drawing, reflecting Mr. Castro's attack on bureaucrats, showed a man standing before a desk, and being peered at through a periscope hoisted above the mounds of papers that hid the official from sight.

Political Humor Blunt

Some of the leading cartoonists here—Cago, Nuez, Posada—have light, delicate drawing styles that show the influences of Saul Steinberg and James Thurber. When they are dealing with nonpolitical subjects, their humor is gentle and wistful. When they deal with politics, they are totally blunt.

The distinction between regular work and political work, is one used by most Cuban artists these days, whether they are abstract painters who design posters, poets who compose marches, or Kafka-influenced authors who write political pamphlets.

One curious aspect to political humor in Cuba is that it is overwhelmingly pro-Government. Either because the opposition is demoralized, or because the Government is quick to make fun of its own mistakes, no real body of rebel humor has developed.